

# Contesting 'Race' and Sport

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Shaming the Colour Line

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## Chapter 7

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### **Critical race theory matters in sport**

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# 7

## CRITICAL RACE THEORY MATTERS IN SPORT

It seems fair to say that most critical race theorists are committed to a programme of scholarly resistance, and most hope that scholarly resistance will lay the groundwork for wider-scale resistance.

*(Bell 1995: 900)*

W. E. B. Du Bois' claim about the ongoing significance of the colour line is reiterated here by Derrick Bell (above) who advocated that such ideas are still relevant today. Bell also argued that critical race theorists are recognisable by their concern with the place of 'race' and racism in society that centres them, while specific intersecting challenges span disciplines that make for a diverse range of interests. A focus on sport here has reaffirmed its place as a significant socio-cultural arena where social mores, norms and ideologies can be created, perpetuated and resisted. With '*race*' as *the point of departure for critique, not the end of it* (Leonardo 2005: xi) the context of sport remains contested and complex. Like other areas of social concern sport forces activist scholars to *struggle where they are* (Gillborn 2016). 'Race' matters in sport and critical 'race' scholars recognise the dangers of 'race' neutrality and politics that leave racialised terrain undisturbed (Burdsey 2011; Carrington 2013; Coram and Hallinan 2017; Hawkins, Carter-Francique et al. 2017). Though this approach can be the path of least resistance for some such a strategy remains the gift of those who will gain privilege from it, or those less 'race' conscious (Sue 2003; Picca and Feagin 2007).

Many will view sport as unimportant without thought for how it surreptitiously reinforces positions on 'race' and dispositions to racism. For example, Serena Williams' perception of how she is viewed in regards to Maria Sharapova signals how stereotypes, gendered racism and class dynamics work to reproduce views of her that become shorthand for other women and men in tennis and beyond (Guardian Sport 2017). Williams' reading of how she is read by others as looking 'mean' because she is Black hints at the prevalence of racial bias and assumptions

that find their way into sport and from there into other social arenas. The racial mechanics that lead to shaping how Williams is viewed as an elite tennis player give some indication of how stereotypes and assumptions lead to other behaviours on the sidelines, in the classroom, and the boardroom. The under-theorised nature of 'race' and sport, racism online and offline, the prevalence of whiteness, privilege and supremacy, and the paucity of Black leaders within reinforces the view that the meritocracy of sport remains aspirational. While 'race' remains the miner's canary for the more insidious, odious tensions in sport and society, Critical Race Theory endorses a critical engagement with shaming colour lines and contesting racial dynamics in sport and society (Guinier and Torres 2003).

This book examines the place of 'race' and its intersections, and racism on topics in sport that many would overlook. Historically these issues have been marginalised, under-researched and under-theorised. Regardless of the topic, a CRT critique in sport, on for example, ice skating, tennis, swimming, governance, college sports, humour, gendered racism, basketball, whiteness, motor racing, the seaside or even cycling can take ordinary phenomena and make them extraordinary; revealing how everyday realities from the living room to the boardroom are replete with signatures of injustice and the potential for resistance and change. As structural racisms and patriarchy tessellate with intersecting identities, microaggressions, aversive and unconscious/implicit bias, at institutional and micro levels, whiteness and White supremacy do the everyday work of maintaining 'race' talk, power relations and the status quo.

Colourblindness and meritocracy facilitate discourses of inclusion in sport that are persuasive and attractive to many while making the targets of antiracism and anti-oppression slippery and elusive. It is not a matter of common acceptance that structural practices of racism embedded elsewhere are likely to be present in the sport that we watch, participate or work in. To challenge ideas of the *sport for all* hyperbole it becomes a challenge first to establish the racialised processes and outcomes tied into philosophies of meritocracy and practices in sport. For example, the critique of equal opportunities in local government sport policy implementation, in Chapter 1, required much more than evidence of racial disparities in the diversity of senior staff in local authorities that could be evidenced in human resources audits, but a more nuanced and critical examination of the way policy gaps emerged through institutionalised practices and micro-level behaviours. The symbiosis of institutional structures and agency are not immediately revealed to the professional gaze, yet the red flags appear where sustained racial disparities, racism and discrimination can be revealed and explained.

The red flags in this book appear in different ways, requiring of us attention in how we consider the coaching landscape and the place of 'race' and gender in coaching and leadership. Puwar (2004: 33) argues that the universal individual in many bureaucracies and professions does not include everyone because the symbolism of White maleness becomes *the indicator* of the prototype of a leader; the natural occupant of higher positions.

Thus different bodies belonging to 'other' places are in one sense out of place as they are 'space invaders'.

It is generally understood that there are disparities in sport and society, though there is a lack of clarity among key stakeholders about how these gaps can be reduced (Amara and Henry 2010; Walseth 2016; Long, Fletcher et al. 2017). Similarly, the effort to improve the diversity of leadership in sport and any subsequent successes should not engender complacency, especially when we do not know what these contexts will reveal for new incumbents (Regan and Feagin 2017). Alternatively, what does improved diversity mean for the traditional occupants of sporting hierarchies and what can we learn from their circumstances? Do we simply 'count heads' (Puwar 2004) to suggest that 'race' no longer matters or do we continue to ask questions about the preponderances of specific masculinities, institutional cultures and unremarked whiteness?

We should be aware of notions of resistance to racism in sport though we are not fully conversant with the forms that resistance might take (Testa and Amara 2016; Hawkins, Carter-Francique et al. 2017). The use of humour cited in Chapter 6 illustrated how it can be used as a device to channel forms of resistance through cultural wealth while sharing techniques to navigate oppressive systems. Humour, rather than joke telling, was much more subtle and foundational to individual and group wellbeing. Its ready and intuitive use was also reflective of the regularity of its application to long-term and everyday circumstances. Drawing on such techniques offers a different discourse for moments that disempower or need 'retelling' as a counter narrative. Resistance for survival in an everyday sense eases the psyche and the systemic racialised injustices that social commentators over the years have aimed to disrupt in theory and practice (Carrington 2012; Fitzpatrick and Santamaría 2015; Coram and Hallinan 2017).

In discussions on the political investment in conducting research on 'race' and racism, Rollock (2013) explains the tensions and power relations that scholars experience in managing the research process. Working with and against racialised power relations and the (dis)empowering privileges of whiteness is an everyday challenge for critical researchers. Rollock (2013) referred to how Black scholars were 'speaking back' from the margins in the way that the White researchers in Chapter 3 were 'speaking from the centre'. Antiracist and social justice agendas do not begin from a standing start, and whether speaking back or speaking from the centre these struggles and travails take on a different slant. 'Race', gender, class and other intersections affect researcher identities, agendas and politics in a way that is only partially documented in this book and by authors like Rollock (2013), Duster, Twine Warren et al. (1999), Hylton (2012), Tuhiwai Smith (2012), Mowatt, French et al. (2013) and Roberts (2013).

'Speaking from the centre' has the potential to reinforce the marginality of those traditionally absent from the academy, while privileging established histories and epistemologies. Yet the dangers of not speaking from positions of strength or privilege is to dysconsciously ignore how one is implicated in maintaining racial hierarchies and the status quo. Though in the words of Razack (1999: 37),

There are landmines strewn across the path wherever storytelling is used [...] it should never be used uncritically [...] its potential as a tool for social change is remarkable, provided we pay attention to the interpretive structures that underpin how we hear and how we take up the stories of oppressed groups.

The device of storytelling is used in a number of the chapters as a way to privilege voices and stories worthy of more attention and understanding. In each case space was enabled to facilitate a challenge to ideologies of domination and power that revealed alternative ways to approach research. Analogous to the way that Lawrence and Tatum (2004) were intrigued to comprehend whether White teachers' racial identities influenced their practice, it was thought provoking to reveal researchers in Chapter 3 explaining how their White privilege and identities did a similar thing. The White researchers' privilege was used to frame their self-articulated critical consciousness necessary for important scholarship on 'race'. The act of eschewing White 'racelessness' had a direct impact on the research process and stores of knowledge used to underpin such work (Blaisdell 2009; Trepagnier 2010; Gillborn 2011).

The researchers in Chapter 3 demonstrated that their whiteness necessarily brought them to a position where 'race' and racism were experientially less well understood than other aspects of their lives, yet significantly their politics enabled a recognition of a differently experienced racialised self. As Ladson-Billings and Tate IV (2006: 22–23) argue, the power of whiteness through its 'property functions' leads to circumstances that can privilege behaviours that conform to dominant norms and practices, social, cultural and economic privileges, and rights to include and exclude in a plethora of fashions. Where the influence of whiteness on practice has been recognised, the danger of racial disparities being sustained and racial critique misinformed has been disrupted (Lawrence and Tatum 2004).

Sport as a site of racial domination and resistance is further emphasised by how we experience it (Leung 2005). Where Whine (1997) cautions us that the internet is an arena with sufficient conditions for discrimination to thrive we saw it in Chapter 5 in the case of Tiger Woods and the social media campaign of the anti-racism sport organisation Kick it Out (Kick it Out 2016). Offline and online interactions shift traditional notions of embodiment. Physicality, while as much as it is constructed by 'race', becomes differently ambiguous and more challenging. Far from being 'race'-neutral, cyberspace is a site where we take our opinions, attitudes and ideologies and reproduce them. Though the dynamics of social interactions in a virtual environment are changed due to proximity, it is clear that sport online is little understood in regards to the operation of 'racial mechanics' (Kang 2003). Racial mechanics map others into racial categories that stimulate racial meaning and could be seen in operation in how online commentators in Chapter 5 conjured with Tiger Woods' racial background and the loaded meanings behind seemingly benign media headlines.

As Kick it Out (2016) has observed, internet platforms can be the problem or the solution, as they have attempted to operationalise limited resources to marshal resistance to hate speech and all forms of discrimination online. Hate speech is a

vague concept that when defined can be countered in different countries by a plethora of different laws. In their mapping exercise on cyberhate, the Council of Europe (2012) recognised the challenge not only of defining hate speech but a need to recognise its peculiarities online. Hate speech was defined as,

Covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-semitism, or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism, and ethno-centrism, discrimination and hostilities against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.

The definition takes a wide-ranging view of hate speech and adopts a non-exhaustive approach to targeted groups. The Council of Europe also acknowledges that online 'cyberhate' requires an additional protocol to take into account the diversity of speech and sources from which hate can emerge online. The Council of Europe (2012: 9) added the following definition to the protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime to supplement its earlier broad definition:

Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime. Article 2.1. For the purposes of this Protocol:

'racist and xenophobic material' means any written material and any image or any other representation of ideas or theories, which advocates, promotes or incites hatred, discrimination or violence, against any individual or group of individuals, based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion if used as a pretext for any of these factors.

The same technologies being manipulated to subjugate can be the very resources used to disrupt racialised acts of denigration. However, because recourse to action differs across nations and continental regions, the global reach of online racists makes the task of combatting racism in sport online much more complex than in more traditional offline incidents. Where hate speech is challenged it is complicated by a need to maintain the democratic rights of individuals and groups' freedom of expression. Further it requires the skill set of specialists that can look beyond the words of a communication to understand what the impact might be of such sharing.

Far from being a frontier of social equality, the internet is a frontier of a different kind, more akin to a battleground: a contested frontier that requires multiple interventions and research to more fully comprehend the nature and extent of the problem for sport in virtual spaces. The danger with the internet is that it can be used almost like a 'smart' racist bomb that can be sent to its target without the perpetrators ever leaving their seats or having to face their victims. As a result, the pace of disturbing and damaging views about 'race' and its intersections, nation and xenophobia, can become a blur. Within this blur of online activity many people now feel more empowered to share hateful views, even offline, while putting into

public office those who reflect such shocking views. This hints at the symbiosis of sport and society whether offline or online. While most people traditionally participate in sport offline, online domains have become popular and relatively censure-free spaces to share a whole range of views that pose a significant problem to understanding how racist ideologies are recreated and perpetuated with relative ease.

### Cycling as a barometer of 'race' matters in sport

I wrote an article in *The Conversation* about how I experienced cycling as a Black man in the north of England (Hylton 2017a). It was provocatively entitled 'The Unbearable Whiteness of Cycling'. My main reason for writing this was to see if others had observed similar patterns that made 'race' salient in a sport that to my knowledge has not had a public conversation on the effects that 'race' and racial dynamics have had on how we enter, progress and experience the sport. Implicit within these observations was the desire to explore processes of inclusion and exclusion and the complexities related to intersections of 'race' with other identities, for instance gender and class (see also Hylton 2017b). The article was about how we understand the processes leading to the inclusion of differently raced bodies rather than anything more sinister.

The piece in *The Conversation* generated a lot of interest and readers were generous in sending links to organisations like Black Girls Do Bike (2017), which is an organisation that they say is about

supporting a community of women of color who share a passion for cycling [...] We look to share positive images of ladies and their bikes to affirm the truth that black girls do indeed bike!

They (BGDB) do not state what led them to set up this organisation but I do hint at it in my *Conversation* article, and more specifically, promising racer Ayesha McGowan does emphasise that

If I had seen another black person in cycling when I was a kid, maybe I would have been inspired to get into it sooner

*(Edinburgh Festival of Cycling 2017)*

McGowan's tour of talks in the UK in the summer of 2017 focused on how she has 'climbed the gender and race ladder' and her journey to becoming 'the first female African-American professional cyclist'.

Like McGowan and the cyclists from Black Girls Do Bike, each July most cycling enthusiasts look forward to the start of the premier cycle race, the Tour de France. Where cycling is understood to have major economic and health benefits there are surprisingly few sources that explain the appeal, or otherwise, for the social groups that participate. Though the global market is valued at over 38 billion euros the constraints of the cycling environment for some social groups

that might be seen as threats or opportunities are less well understood. For example, Steinbach, Green et al. (2011) report that gender, ethnicity and income affect cycling rates and preferences. In London, only one in three cyclists are women, and in a city where a third of the population identifies as Black, Asian and minority ethnic, 86 per cent of male cyclists and 94 per cent of female cyclists are White. To compound matters, the wealthier a person is in London the more likely they are to cycle. Depending on geography there are different participation histories for cycling. So, in London more men cycle than women yet in the Netherlands more women cycle than men (Green, Steinbach et al. 2010). Though there are regional and national differences that affect all of these variables, ethnicity, gender and socio-economics are significant factors. Cycling is a sport that has been described as globally very 'White' and limited in terms of which social groups participate (Seaton 2009). Cycling journalist Seaton (2009) explains that he could count most of the professional Black riders in the UK as there are so few. In addition, Olympic Team GB cycling coach David Brailsford told Seaton (2009) that,

Breaking down the barriers to wider participation from black and ethnic minority groups remains the great unconquered goal for British cycling.

Despite the former mayor of London's strategy to increase cycling and the demographics of cycling in the capital there remains a firmly White, male and middle-class constituency of participants in the sport (Green, Steinbach et al. 2010). There is evidence of other reasons to cycle, or otherwise, that include fear of the road and other drivers, childcare, commuting, and security, yet little evidence of studies that consider ethnic differences. The literature review conducted for Transport for London by Green, Steinbach et al. (2010) identified ethnic segregation as an issue for some groups not wanting to cycle through 'White' areas in addition to the lack of infrastructure, cycle training, low levels of bike ownership and, significantly, *seeing people that looked like themselves* being a key facilitator across all population groups. Thus, many who identify as Black will not see the everyday normality of cycling that might enthrall their White counterparts. Doubts arise about identity and belonging where alienating imagery, the predominance of whiteness and closed social networks are in operation.

Where Steinbach, Green et al. (2011: 1124) ask the question *How do gendered, class and ethnic categories affect the uptake of cycling?* this section highlights the significance of how 'race' and racial processes in sport can affect attitudes to cycling in different contexts, at different levels of performance; and as reflective of structural and institutional racism. These instances challenge the mythology of sport as fair and equitable and reinforce it as a racially contested arena. It does this when micro-level (individual) experiences mesh with cultural and institutional racial bias and racism. As a series of connected incidents in a low-controversy sport (apart from blood doping), cycling is used here as an example of how *the familiar can be made strange* (Mills 1970).



As a keen cyclist I have reflected on the positive experiences of long rides in the company of friends. Over a number of years I have occasionally considered how the quality of my rides have differed depending on where I go and with whom. In one group I am hypervisible and in another I am invisible. I am hypervisible in a group of White friends, yet this is rarely made an issue by them or by others that see our peloton. The odd second look has never been followed by a remark though these uneasy, ambiguous and sometimes unwelcoming gazes can be interpreted in ways that could be viewed as microaggressive (Tate 2016). However, where I am invisible *my group is hypervisible* because they are all Black and are a real rarity in cycling circles. It is in this group where glimpses have turned into stares. It is in this group where passers-by have taken time to wind their windows down to hurl racial slurs in our direction. In and around Leeds in Yorkshire it does not take long to cycle out of the inner urban areas before entering the wonderful countryside, though in these 'White spaces' socio-cultural differences between those who inhabit these spaces and the cyclists become exaggerated and irritate those who implicitly police ingroup and outgroup relations.

These tensions are mirrored at loftier levels where the welcome for some world-class Black cyclists has been disturbing. The MTN-Qhubeka Tour de France team from Africa complained of racial abuse from other teams. The team was made up of a mix of Africans from Eritrea, Rwanda, South Africa and Algeria with US, Norwegian, Austrian and Australian riders. In what was described as a 'heat of the battle' exchange a victimised rider was issued with an apology while the offending cyclist's team expelled the rider in question and issued a statement of 'no tolerance for such behaviour' (Press Association 2015). Though the team has won tour events this incident is not isolated. The team principal, Douglas Ryder, added that in the previous year,

One of the biggest teams in the world ... in the Tour of Spain, when we were trying to bring one of our riders to the front going into the mountains, [said] *you guys don't belong here, fxxx off to the back of the bunch.*

According to Ryder, these talented Black riders have had to rely on the support of their White riding and management colleagues to gain acceptance, and even though Daniel Teklehaimanot has won the King of the Mountains polka dot jersey in the Tour de France, they have struggled to be accepted as cyclists because they are seemingly out of place in this 'White sport' (Press Association 2015). These incidents are in stark contrast to the ethos of the team name; Qhubeka means 'to progress' or 'to move forward'. Cycling is also a useful example to explain how racial processes and racism reinvent themselves across spaces, recreational and elite contexts. In the case of the US there is an added dimension that more clearly ties in a state-sponsored racial element to recreational cycling, to which we now turn.

In Chicago, cycling is observed to be racialised in a way that accentuates Critical Race Theory notions of the structurally embedded nature of racism. In a city where cycling patterns are overlaid with police citations the bulk of infractions

occur in the least popular cycling spaces. Though statistics can only reveal part of a story, the disproportionality of these statistics raises serious concerns. These spaces are racialised as Black and the unequal share of the citations are issued to African Americans. Despite the popularity of cycling in predominantly White communities, over 8 years (2008–2016) the top ten citation areas include seven that are African American and three that are Latino (Wisniewski 2017). Police actions are seen as insensitive to the lack of cycling infrastructure for bike security and cycle paths, that forces some cyclists to use paths away from busy traffic. The issue is not purely about ‘race’, as class, diasporic movements and historical settlements form part of the larger story here. Real estate ‘red lining’ as practised by ex-NBA team owner Donald Sterling (see Hylton and Lawrence 2016) could also be factored into the reason why African American and Latino communities live in these spaces. These issues raise concerns over the victimisation of Black people in Chicago, and is reflected in other diverse areas in the US and internationally (Epp and Maynard-Moody 2014; Quinton 2015; Epp and Maynard-Moody 2016). In a mundane way infractions need police action, though in a more critical way they reveal racial processes at play that lead to the criminalisation of people because of how they look or cultural background when at leisure or on simple commutes to work (Glover 2009; Glynn 2014). Wisniewski (2017) states that,

Some bike advocates and an elected official expressed concern that police may be unfairly targeting cyclists in black communities while going easier on law-breaking cyclists in white areas. Blacks, Latinos and whites each make up about a third of the city’s residents, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Bloom (2017) is one of the few to establish a link between ‘race’ and bicycles when he discussed the use of bikes as part of a disproportionate aggressive policing strategy from the early 1970s in Washington DC. Bicycle stakeouts or stings have become a cutting edge to bicycle theft reduction policies in Washington. It was at a bicycle stakeout where African American Gregory Coleman was shot in 1972 for taking a bike he thought was his own stolen one. A policeman stated that the gun fell out of his holster and shot Coleman by accident (Bloom 2017). The racial pattern of the policing of city boundaries due to the enhanced mobility of ethnic populations is an aspect of cycling that he argues has been present since the late nineteenth century, though there is a paucity of research on this topic. Since the initial bike registration policy in Washington was repealed in 2008, there emerged the space for individual and institutional racial bias in the ‘random inspections’ that ensued. This registration policy underpinned the stop and search ‘pre-textual stops’ that led to the profiling and criminalisation of many Black communities. The profiling of suspicious behaviour or characters on the streets was subject to interpretation and therefore open to the racial profiling that has led to the over-citing and over-incarceration of Black people. In the 1970s the fear of bike gangs penetrating racialised city boundaries, co-constructed with the police an image of cycling requiring

control, and yet when we explore the links between ethnicity and cycling we can see similar patterns of policing today.

These ruminations lead me to conclude that cycling is subject to the same social problems brought into other sports by wider dispositions to 'race' and racial bias (Duru 2011; Harrison 2013; Lorenz and Murray 2014). The familiar really is quite strange, though once we become aware of racial dynamics in cycling what should the key stakeholders in cycling do next? Indeed, what might begin to explain this state of affairs? Structural, institutional and individual racisms? In the US, the shift to the Right has been obvious, and for many seemingly unproblematic. The first term of the Republican Party in 2017 followed one of the most baffling and brutal presidential races in history where it seemed that misogyny, racism, xenophobia and ignorance were not only tolerated but led the strategy for a successful presidential campaign (Bhattacharya 2017). The confidence shown by many willing to bring their brand of 'alternative' politics to the fore reinforced the evidence of pernicious structural racism and patriarchy in the US as elsewhere. Analogous to this, the bike statistics between some of the areas differentiated by ethnicity, made it difficult to move beyond the problem of the Chicago police's institutionalised racism even when they are under surveillance from Black communities in Chicago (Bosman and Smith 2017). Over nine months in 2016 the low-income African American area of Austin received 321 citations compared to the five citations given to those in the well-off predominantly White area of Lincoln Park. It has been suggested that the bike stops are a pretext excuse for other searches, and in heavily policed areas where drug-related crime is a policy priority, biking fines are likely to be conflated with wider police strategies.

The Chicago police do not have a good record where 'race' is concerned. They have been consistently viewed as indiscriminately targeting and victimising Black people while their lack of accountability led them to accept that they were institutionally racist (Chicago Police Accountability Task Force Community Forum 2016). The mayor-appointed task force stated in its report that though the Chicago population is relatively evenly split between African Americans, White people and Latinos, the statistics reveal the disproportionate attention paid to Black communities.

Black people were the subjects in 72 percent of the thousands of investigative street stops that did not lead to arrests during the summer of 2014.

*(Davey and Smith 2016)*

In Chicago, there was also a culture of individual behaviour being ignored by commanders after excessive force was used. Imagine the difference in how some cyclists in Chicago experience their sport compared with others. Bosman and Smith (2017), reporting on the Chicago Task Force findings, outlined how an officer was found guilty of pointing a gun at teenagers on bikes suspected of trespassing. Sport is clearly a contested arena while everyday cyclists and even Tour de France competitors reveal that 'race' is significant in how others perceive them, associate with them and treat them. These incidents are not peculiar to Chicago.

New York City is also plagued with what has been described as ‘the new stop and frisk’ (Nwoye 2014). *Biking while Black* in New York City can lead to an infraction that leads to a prison sentence. The same disproportionate condemnation of racial profiling where *there are more sidewalk stops where there are more stop and frisks* where in 2009 and 2010 bike summonses were the third highest category of summons (Nwoye 2014). Cycling, like other sports is subject to the same social processes, and depending upon context and individual circumstances ‘race’ and racial processes present in ways that require a critical lens. Racial profiling is not limited to the police and can be the starting point for any number of interactions offline or online (Glover 2009; Foxtton 2012).

### The ‘while Black’ phenomenon

The stop and frisk bike stings (stop and search in the UK) pre-textual searches have been tagged with the tongue-in-cheek idea of ‘while Black’ that began with the experience of Black people being targeted for offences while driving (Harris 1997). ‘Driving while Black’ has now developed its own momentum where certain activities have the propensity to draw claims of racial profiling leading to disproportionate racial outcomes. The bicycle incidents would fall into this category, and ‘cycling while Black’ has been shown to be disproportionately problematic for Black people in comparison to their White counterparts. It demonstrates the inextricable complexities of ‘race’ in our lives and the inescapable trap of structural racism for the sport and leisure we participate in. For instance, consider booking a trip to a sporting event; this experience for some could make the difference between whether they travel again for such an event or give up a sport as a result of racism in the hospitality industry insinuating itself into a sport-related context. The racialised ignominies experienced through sport become indicative of broader social problems because racism is embedded in society. For example, the case of some people’s experiences of Airbnb demonstrates how sporting contexts can be inextricably linked to other parts of our lives. Sport can affect or be affected in ways that may seem unconnected to significant parts of our social lives and may run parallel or contiguously through instances of microaggressions.

#### ***Racial bias: Airbnb***

As identified in specific sporting examples in earlier chapters, similar controversy has shed light on the dangers of racial bias with the internet accommodation firm Airbnb. Airbnb has established a business model that allows homeowners to rent their properties to paying guests. It was found in a Harvard study (Luscombe 2014) that there was a pattern of White landlords rejecting requests from people with African American- or Latino-sounding names. Airbnb inadvertently opened its organisation up to bias and discrimination when it allowed its landlords and renters to reveal their identities. The Black guests also found their ability to get reservations was significantly improved when profile photos were changed for more

neutral ones such as landscapes. Whether these behaviours were conscious or otherwise on the part of the landlords is immaterial given the racialised outcomes for those most affected. There was also an additional pattern of Black landlords charging less for the same properties rented by White landlords because they recognised the operation of racial prejudice in the marketplace. Airbnb's CEO stated,

Airbnb has an obligation to be honest about our shortcomings, and do more to get our house in order. A part of the process has been learning how to fight explicit racism and implicit biases that can lead to discrimination.

*(Weise 2016)*

This commitment from the Airbnb CEO led to its managers reacting to the flaws in its business model by establishing new procedures that included amending social identifiers, non-discrimination agreements, instant booking programmes, blocking landlords from booking places they have said were occupied, and also reworking its own hiring practices to challenge racial bias. The move to change its hiring practices reflects Airbnb's poor ethnic diversity and a desire to shift its organisational culture to reduce the chances of such errors occurring in the future. It has done this by establishing a 'Rooney Rule' policy that ensures that all senior staff recruitment pools include women and Black candidates (Staff 2016).

## Conclusion

The relevance of critical race scholarship is as important today as it was in W. E. B. Du Bois' time. Just as any reading of society must consider the place of 'race' and racism, we must recognise that sport requires a critical lexicon that moves beyond the rhetoric of antiracism (Gillborn 2006). Applying a critical lens to sport necessitates an approach that acknowledges that racial power relations are at play and if left uncontested will remain to thrive. Racial processes in sport are often unspectacular and seemingly harmless, though their accumulated effects can be the difference between employment or unemployment, being scouted or cut, taking up one sport or another, or governing bodies achieving excellence or falling short.

Ways forward include increasing diversity in sport at a number of levels, such as improving the number of Black women leaders and academics. Their shared experiences of leading through the coaching and governance pathways bring a diversity of ideas to knowledge formation and policy communities. There are a number of examples where Black women and leadership has been incorporated into studies that extend our knowledge of 'race' and leadership (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis 2010; White 2010; Curtis 2014). Working with indigenous Australian women leaders requires insight from indigenous women researchers in addition to critical others in the field. Similarly, Curtis (2014) argues that research on 'race' and leadership, especially where Black women are included, enables 'new voices' to emerge while 'sharing absent realities'. As this diversity benefits the academy while

challenging its dominant epistemologies, Black women's experiences become part of the leadership narrative that is valued. White (2010) is an example of how inclusive research on leadership can further our knowledge of diverse leadership experiences while recognising the political contract necessary for such work to be conducted.

On this note, the paucity of literature on Black leaders in sport leaves in the shadows the skills developed by them that enable the navigation of systems that unfairly constrain and disempower. These competences and experiences should not be under-valued or ignored. In the interests of social justice and effective leadership, stakeholders in sport that include activist scholars, policy makers and practitioners should be required to augment their understanding and adherence to these important concerns. These issues resonate with the imperative to develop culturally sensitive research, as outlined in Chapter 3 where the biographies of White researchers revealed a labyrinthine task of reflection/reflexion and political standpoints required to conduct critical research on 'race'. These positions did not necessarily improve the representation of Black researchers in the academy but utilised White identities, privilege and informed standpoints with the aim of disrupting racial hierarchies, discrimination and oppression in sport and leisure research.

The colour line remains a twenty-first-century concern that has been consistently established through the way racism has remained embedded in society. The challenges ahead for our theory, policy and practice in sport are no less significant today than in previous generations. Though the challenges today might be similar to those in the past they remain fluid, differently organised online and offline and generally more covert. Critical Race Theory remains a thought-provoking and pragmatic framework for activist scholars. Its architecture, defined by common tenets outlined in Chapter 1, is foundational to critiques that centre 'race', racism and their impacts on sport and society. CRT's focus on transformation rather than liberal incrementalism guards against critique for critique's sake. Past and present racial processes and formations that require disruption remain the point of departure in social arenas like sport, whose influence has the potential to transform dysfunctional social arrangements.